

# New Review to Explore Opportunities to Strengthen Salt Marsh Protections

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*Pew seeks expert input on policy solutions to conserve critical coastal habitat*

The Pew Charitable Trusts is working to secure measurable protections for foundational coastal habitats, including oyster reefs, seagrass meadows, and kelp forests. As part of this effort, Pew is undertaking a project to assess current policies and practices for conserving salt marshes to determine whether more can be done to safeguard these vital habitats in the face of changing ocean conditions.

Salt marshes are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. But despite the essential ecological and socio-economic services these habitats provide, they are disappearing. Development, water diversion from dams and culverts, and other activities, as well as rising sea levels and increasing storm severity, threaten salt marsh habitats across the United States.

Agencies at all levels of government, scientists, and nongovernmental organizations are actively working to conserve and restore salt marshes through site-specific restoration projects, research, and other practices. During 2019 and 2020, Pew will assess whether and how stronger national-level policies could complement efforts in coastal states and localities to conserve salt marshes and evaluate promising strategies to determine whether those policies and approaches can serve as models for action in other states or at the federal level.

## Goal

Identify national- and state-level policy approaches to inform recommendations for enhancing salt marsh conservation, with a focus on solutions to help these habitats survive sea level rise.

## Approach

- **Promising practices.** Identify and research successful conservation approaches and programs, with specific focus on impacts of sea level rise.
- **Research.** Compile existing data on salt marsh habitat in the U.S. and identify research gaps and areas of consensus and disagreement on policy interventions.
- **Expertise.** Engage with a wide array of knowledgeable stakeholders, including salt marsh managers, scientists, regulators, and representatives from NGOs to evaluate opportunities, issues, and challenges related to the restoration, conservation, and long-term management of salt marshes.

## Process

Pew will collect key insights and information from this broad pool of experts through:

- **A survey.** An online, standardized questionnaire will efficiently gather and assess input from a variety of stakeholders regarding challenges, needs, and opportunities in salt marsh conservation with an emphasis on sea level rise considerations.
- **Interviews/in-person meetings.** One-on-one interviews will support deeper dives into specific issues.
- **Regional meetings.** Small regional gatherings will further capture input from stakeholders who are on the ground and involved with salt marsh management, regulation, research, restoration, and conservation advocacy.
- **National workshop.** A convening of approximately 25 experts from across the country will help Pew select specific, effective, national-level management and policy solutions to address major threats to salt marsh habitats.

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